

## BACKGROUND

The Montana /Idaho Airshed Group is composed of organizations that conduct a “major” amount of prescribed burning and the agencies that regulate this burning. The Airshed Group is composed of three Units: Montana, North Idaho and South Idaho, formed in 1978, 1990 and 1999, respectively. An Executive Board is tasked with managing the business of the Airshed Group. The two states are subdivided into 29 airsheds and 17 impact zones (special protection areas). Each airshed is assigned an airshed coordinator who acts as the primary point of contact.

Each Unit has a Memorandum of Agreement that describes its Smoke Management Program and commits its signatories to abide by that plan. The three Units have a joint operating plan which details policy and procedures all members agree to abide by.

The Monitoring Unit in Missoula, MT is the administrative unit that coordinates prescribed burning activities of the three Airshed Units. It issues burn recommendations based on meteorological forecasts, air quality conditions and proposed burn activity. The burn recommendations can be issued on a statewide, airshed, impact zone, elevation and individual burn basis.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

### Smoke Monitoring Unit:

Phone: (406) 329-4952

Fax: (406) 829-6901

### Executive Board:

Phone: (208) 666-8672

### Public Air Quality Hotlines:

MONTANA: 1-800-225-6779

NORTH IDAHO: 1-800-633-6247

### SOUTH IDAHO:

Pocatello/Chubbuck: (208) 236-6173

Treasure Valley: (208) 373-0313

### Websites:

- Smoke Monitoring Unit:  
<http://www.smokemu.org>
- Daily air quality web page:  
<http://www.deq.state.id.us/air/air1.htm>  
<http://www.deq.state.mt.us/Airmonitoring/AirDataMap3.asp>



## MONTANA/IDAHO AIRSHED GROUP



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## BENEFITS

The intent of the Airshed Group is to minimize smoke impacts while using prescribed fire to accomplish land management objectives. By managing prescribed burning with the above goals in mind, many benefits are gained by those who live in Montana and Idaho. These benefits include:

**Public health protection:** By monitoring air quality and prescribed burning, the Airshed Group is able to reduce smoke impacts in areas where prescribed burns are conducted. This helps to keep the public safe from the potential adverse effects of smoke.

**Reduced Wildfire risk:** Wildfire risk is decreased when areas clogged with accumulated forest debris are treated and the amount of fuel available for fires is reduced.

**Ecosystem and wildlife health:** Clearing brush and small trees through prescribed burning leads to a more vigorous and healthy forest that is less susceptible to devastating wildfires.

**Visibility Improvement:** Compared to the alternative of wildfire, prescribed fire, applied with effective smoke management, reduces smoke impacts to visibility at National Parks and Wilderness areas.

## RAZU

In 2001, the National Center for Landscape Fire Analysis at the University of Montana developed a new internet-based reporting system for tracking and reporting prescribed fires and a computerized Geographic Information System application for the Airshed Group. The reporting system, called RAZU, and the GIS mapping application were implemented in March 2002. The RAZU burn reporting system allows Airshed Group members to build preseason burn-lists directly into the system's master database, propose burns on a daily basis and report accomplishments on burns that they conduct. RAZU also allows members to access proposed and completed burn information directly via the Internet for tracking and planning prescribed fires. The GIS program aids in analysis of burns entered into RAZU by allowing for automatic, detailed mapping of all burns in the database. The Smoke Monitoring Unit's Program Coordinator administers the system.



## MEMBERS

The Airshed Group is currently comprised of 26 members. The members consist of private industries and Government Agencies at the Federal, State and Local levels. These 26 members collectively have 198 different offices or districts that log on to and use RAZU on a regular basis. The Airshed Group members are:

- US Forest Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- Army Corps of Engineers
- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
- Idaho Department of Lands
- University of Idaho
- Missoula County Health Department
- Smurfit-Stone Container Corporation
- RY Timber, Inc.
- Pyramid Mountain Lumber
- Stoltze Land and Lumber
- Wyoming Sawmills, Inc.
- Potlatch Corporation
- Stimson Lumber
- Inland Empire Paper Co.
- Plum Creek Timber
- Boise Cascade Corporation
- Coeur d'Alene Tribe
- Forest Capital
- Louisiana Pacific Corp.
- Sun Mountain Lumber